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INFO RUEHZH/HAITI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 001451

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/29/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [HA](#) [KPKO](#)
SUBJECT: HAITI MONTHLY: AUGUST, 2007

REF: PORT AU PRINCE 1240

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Classified By: Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson, reasons 1.5(b) and (d).

¶1. (U) Summary: This is a monthly report on various topics of interest which do not merit a full reporting cable. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) PROMINENT LAVALAS ACTIVIST DISAPPEARS. The Haitian media reports that Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine, Lavalas leader and potential senatorial candidate in November's upcoming election, disappeared on August 12th and may have been kidnapped. Pierre-Antoine disappeared around 10:00 PM after departing from a meeting with a human rights delegation from Foundation Mapou and the Haiti Priority Project. (Note: Poloff met with the same delegation on Friday, August 17 at the chancery. End note). The HNP found Pierre-Antoine's car abandoned, with a shirt and CDs on the seat, on Delmas 10 in Port-au-Prince. On Monday, August 13, the supposed kidnapper called demanding USD 300,000 for his release. The Haitian media has not reported any further contacts with the kidnapper. Embassy contacts increasingly suspect this may not be a genuine kidnapping, since there have been no reported negotiations over ransom amount and payment, or any further pleas for help from family members, which typify kidnappings in Haiti. The HNP reports no leads.

¶3. (C) PRIME MINISTER SUPPORTS SENATE ELECTIONS BY DEADLINE, INDIRECT ELECTIONS NEXT YEAR. PM Alexis told the Ambassador on August 28 that he supports holding elections for one-third of the Senate by January 2008 as mandated by the constitution (reftel) and is awaiting President Preval's decision on the matter. However, he and the President believe Haiti is not ready for indirect elections this year, but stated those would be held next year. Since without indirect elections there can be no Permanent Electoral Council (CEP), Alexis said the idea had been floated to allow political parties to nominate counselors for a new Provisional Electoral Council, from which Preval would select the nine final counselors. Alexis stated that it is the Prime Minister who is charged with nominating a Director General of the CEP, be it permanent or provisional. The Ambassador emphasized the importance of having all constitutionally-mandated elections held on time. Setting the gears in motion for Senate

elections still awaits Preval's action.

¶4. (C) PRO-ARISTIDE PRIEST RETURNS TO HAITI, NOT SEEN AS THREAT. Self-described Jean-Bertrand Aristide representative Father Gerard Jean-Juste returned to Haiti for a few days in mid-August after nearly two years of exile in Miami, declaring he would continue to mobilize support for the return of Aristide to Haiti. (Note: Jean-Juste faces criminal charges in Haiti related to activities under the Aristide regime, but was released from custody in January 2006 to seek treatment for leukemia. End note). On August 28, PM Alexis told the Ambassador that Jean-Juste personally contacted him during Alexis' recent visit to Miami and confided that he was continuing medical treatment in Florida for his leukemia. Alexis said he is not at all concerned that Jean-Juste could become a destabilizing factor. MINUSTAH reported to POL Couns on Aug 29 that Jean-Juste had since left the country.

¶5. (U) MAYOR OF CITE SOLEIL GRIPES ABOUT USG, THEN RECANTS. Mayor of Cite Soleil Wilson Louis was quoted in the Haitian press on August 21 stating that he has not yet 'seen the color' of the USD 20 million promised to Cite Soleil by the USG, referring to the Haiti Stabilization Initiative (HSI) funds. When HSI Deputy StabCoord confronted Mayor Louis on August 23 about his blatantly untrue comments, Louis claimed he had been misquoted but proceeded to request that HSI roll out programming more quickly. (Comment: The previous week, on August 17, Mayor Louis stood with Embassy staff at an HSI-funded sports camp and thanked the USG for its support. Louis often complains publicly about lack of projects in Cite Soleil, but generally back-pedals in private conversations. This may simply be an attempt to goad donors into doing more for his community, but nonetheless the tactic is frustrating to the HSI team and others working in the area. End comment.)

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¶6. (U) SOLAR-POWERED TRAFFIC LIGHTS. Director of Political Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Weiner Jean-Baptiste told Poloff on August 7 that the Ministry of Transportation (MoT) has purchased new solar-powered traffic lights from Spain. The MoT is in the process of installing the lights in Port-au-Prince and Cap Haitien, then will expand installation to other cities throughout the country thereafter. According to Weiner, the MoT will complete installation before the beginning of the school year. Enforcement of fines for drivers who disobey the new lights will go into effect in October. Jean-Baptiste noted that the currently unsynchronized traffic light patterns, however, are bound to cause heavier traffic congestion.

¶7. (U) CANADA OFFERS HURRICANE RELIEF. Following 9 fatalities and severe property damage caused by Hurricane Dean, the Canadian Minister of International Cooperation announced on August 21 that the Canadian government will provide Haiti with USD \$2 million in humanitarian assistance. The aid will supplement disaster relief efforts of NGO's and international humanitarian organizations.

¶8. (U) CUSTOMS WORKERS STRIKE (BRIEFLY) AT NATIONAL PORT. Customs workers at Haiti's National Port Authority (APN) staged a day-long strike on August 9. APN customs employees staged the strike to protest the August 8 arrest of two customs employees in connection with the imprisonment of prominent Haitian businessmen Fritz and David Brandt on charges of customs fraud. Port operations resumed as normal on August 10.

¶9. (SBU) DEFENSE MINISTERS CONVENE ON MINUSTAH. The Defense Ministers of nine Latin countries with contingents in MINUSTAH will convene in Port-au-Prince, Sept. 4-5 to discuss the peace-keeping operation. MINUSTAH Political Adviser Le Chevalier says the SRSg will try to organize a separate meeting of Core Group representatives with the Ministers

during their stay in Haiti. (Note: The same countries' deputy defense ministers are conferring in Guatemala on August 31, where US or Canadian representatives will participate as observers. End note.)
SANDERSON